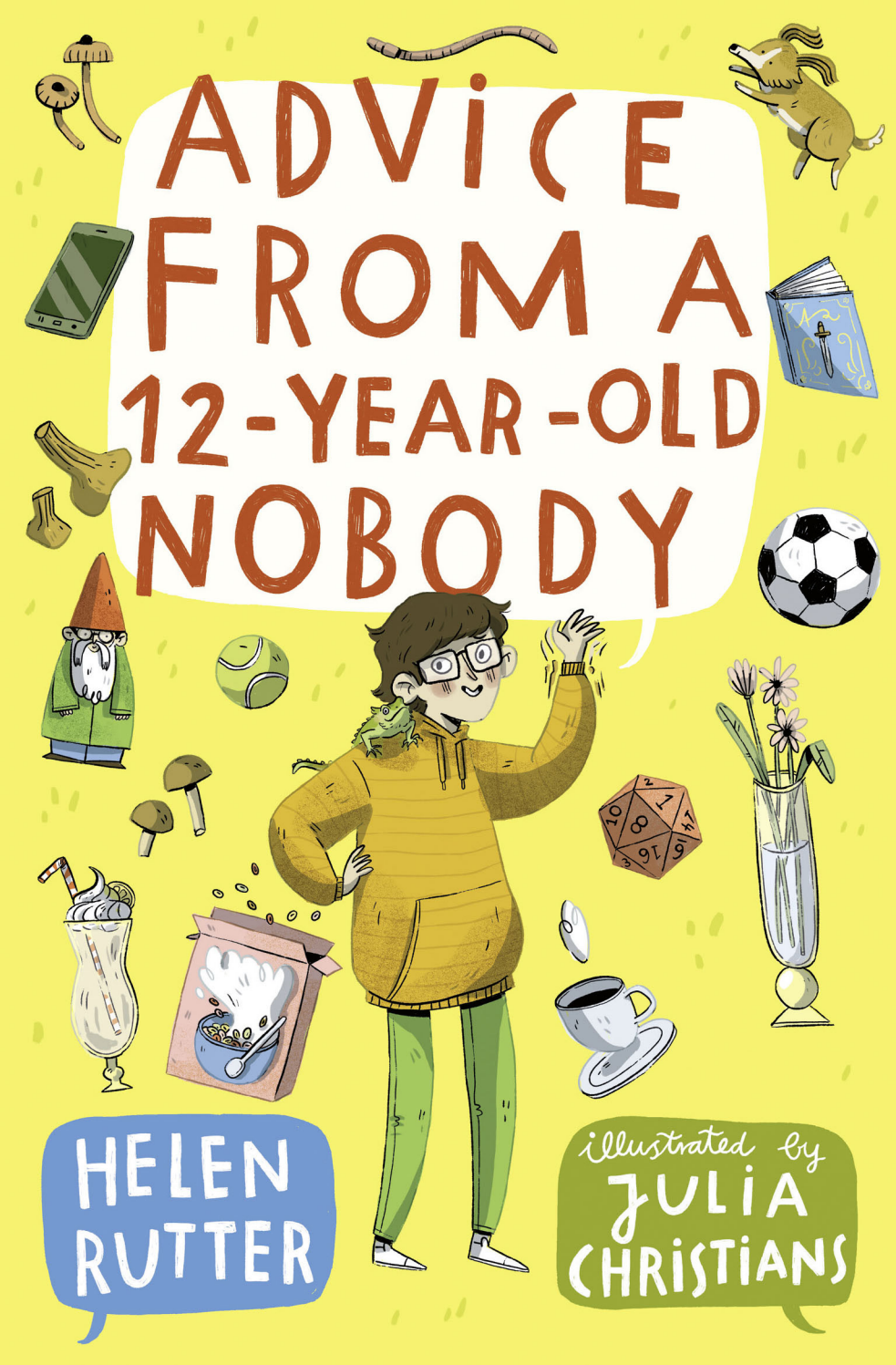
ADVICE FROM A 12-YEAR-OLD NOBODY



HELEN RUTTER

illustrated by JULIA CHRISTIANS

Published by Barrington Stoke
An imprint of HarperCollins*Publishers*
1 Robroyston Gate, Glasgow, G33 1JN

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

HarperCollins*Publishers*
Macken House, 39/40 Mayor Street Upper,
Dublin 1, DO1 C9W8, Ireland

First published in 2026

Text © 2026 Helen Rutter
Illustrations © 2026 Julia Christians
Cover design © 2026 HarperCollins*Publishers* Limited

The moral right of Helen Rutter and Julia Christians to be identified as the author and illustrator of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988

ISBN 978-0-00-875958-2

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in whole or in any part in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission in writing of the publisher and copyright owners

Without limiting the exclusive rights of any author, contributor or the publisher of this publication, any unauthorised use of this publication to train generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies is expressly prohibited. HarperCollins also exercise their rights under Article 4(3) of the Digital Single Market Directive 2019/790 and expressly reserve this publication from the text and data mining exception

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound in India by Replika Press Pvt. Ltd.

MIX
Paper | Supporting responsible forestry
FSC™ C007454
FSC
www.fsc.org

This book contains FSC™ certified paper and other controlled sources to ensure responsible forest management.

For more information visit: www.harpercollins.co.uk/green

ADVICE FROM A 12-YEAR-OLD NOBODY

HELEN RUTTER

illustrated by
JULIA CHRISTIANS

Barrington Stoke

CHAPTER 1

My mum answers questions for a living. It's the first thing that comes up when you Google "Life Advice". There is a picture of her, next to the words: ***Ask Amanda Anything!***

I don't know how it's even a job. Mum gives advice and tells people how to live their lives, and they seem to love it. She had a blog for a while, where she answered questions and posted pictures of pretty things like forests or beaches with a cheesy quote next to them.

But everything changed about a year ago when Mum filmed an answer about how to be happy. It went viral, and her job has been non-stop ever since. Mum has over a million followers on Instagram, and people send her

hundreds of questions a day. They can ask really silly things like:

Why is my dog weeing on the carpet??!

And some serious things like:

I am being bullied. Why do I find it so hard to tell anyone?

She gets questions about love problems, body problems, neighbour problems, family problems, friend problems and every other type of problem you can imagine. Mum always says I'm not allowed to read them. "They're not all age appropriate, Vinny," she tells me. "And you don't want your head full of other people's problems."

But I read them anyway. That's the thing about the internet – anyone can look at anything. Mum has blocked Insta on my phone,

but I can just look on the school computer or on the iPad or desktop at home.

The internet is kind of freaky. Once I saw a video of a horse drowning, and I dreamed about it for months. I couldn't stop thinking about the horse's big scared eyes. I wish I hadn't seen it, but it was too late.

I've not seen anything too bad on Mum's advice page. The worst is old people talking about their private parts, which is nowhere near as bad as the scared horse eyes.

I'm not sure how my mum became the person everyone asks for help. It's not like our family has everything sorted. If you give people advice, shouldn't your own life be pretty amazing? Well, ours isn't, even if the pictures of Mum make it look that way – like her standing in the living room looking thoughtful in front of flowers in vases.

I guess Mum couldn't post pictures of the truth, could she? Dad getting in later and later every night, or my sister Mabel getting into constant dramas at school and coming home in tears, slamming the doors. Those pictures wouldn't get many likes.



Mum would never post a picture of me. I don't fit in with her "brand" at all. I'm too skinny, I have spots all over my face and braces on my teeth. I have no interest whatsoever in becoming an Insta influencer, a TikToker or a YouTuber who shouts into the camera.

I'm an anomaly. That means I don't fit. I'm different.

I have this thing on my phone that gives me a new word to learn every day. Today's word is anomaly. I'm going to try to use it three times, so then it might stick.

I'm a twelve-year-old boy who uses the word "anomaly". It's not really a surprise I feel I don't fit in anywhere. I'm the type of odd bod who should be asking Mum for advice.

I used to be able to ask her anything. Before Mum got so busy that her phone never stops buzzing and beeping. We used to play a game every teatime called "Finger on the

Button". She would ask me questions like, "What made you giggle today?" or "What strange thing did you notice today?"

I would press my imaginary button and make a noise and then answer the question. Mum would listen and laugh at my answers, and I miss it. I secretly knew it started as a trick to find out what I had eaten for lunch, but I didn't mind. I miss having her listen to me.

If I could ***Ask Amanda Anything*** now, what would I ask?

Am I an old man trapped in a kid's body?

Why are other kids so loud?

Does everyone put their finger in their bellybutton and then sniff it? Or is it just me?

But I never ask Mum anything, not any more. We haven't played Finger on the Button for months. She's too busy now, and the last thing she needs is her strange son asking her stuff. Mum has the world's problems to answer. So I just keep quiet – I just keep being an anomaly.